

The Rural Economic Development Council
Invites You to
Spend Some Time in
**the
Country**



2003 Annual Report
Rural Economic
Development Council
May 2004

REDC members stay aware of rural needs through involved visits and meetings with businesses in the rural economy.



2003 ANNUAL REPORT

MAY 2004

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2003—FOUNDATION FOR A MODERN RURAL ECONOMY

A viable rural economy over the next four years is the subject of industry sector SWOT analyses by the REDC. The SWOT analyses resulted in recommendations that appear in a 4-year plan format showing the overall economic goal, the objectives addressing the goal, the methods of measuring success and the specific, identifiable actions needed. The Committee has consulted with over 50 individuals representing the Wine Industry, Ornamental Horticultural Industry, Edible Horticulture Industry, Cattle Industry, Equine Industry, and Tourism Industry. The recommendations contained in this **Four-Year Plan** are based on the industry conversations.

This program proposes to:

- Use volunteer action and shared private funding wherever possible
- Maximize the use of existing County resources to create new business



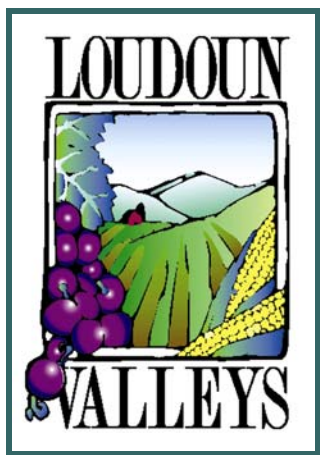
- Select goals and actions that can be achieved. Maximize economic ties, cooperation and revenue benefits of the rural and suburban parts of the county.
- Increase the contribution of farm production, rural businesses and tourism to overall county economic health.

A Message from the Chairman

During 2003, the Rural Economic Development Council (REDC) focused on farm viability. Taking a fresh look at the Farm Viability Grant Program led the REDC to conduct open-to-the-public group discussions with livestock owners, farm operators, and horticultural producers. These industry segments have high priority since they are land extensive, have relatively high economic potential, and are attainable. The results of these discussions are contained in this report. The REDC will monitor activity in these sectors and work to stimulate additional rural economic expansion.

The Council also served as a forum for discussion on rural economic issues, including the need for a county-wide trails system, the Heritage Plan, tourism marketing efforts, private sector marketing initiatives and rural economic land use issues. Showcasing rural economic models, the REDC held meetings at Great Country Farm, Willowcroft Farm Winery and Patowmack Farm - Dinner in the Garden.

Bob Andros



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Loudoun continues to rank 2nd among Virginia counties for acres of planted wine grapes.

Visit the Loudoun Winegrowers Association website at www.loudounwine.com



WINEGROWERS

The Loudoun wine industry continued making advances in 2003 despite the challenging weather conditions during the year. Precipitation for the year exceeded 65 inches (the normal for Loudoun is 42), leading to problems with fruit set. Also, Hurricane Isabel and the severe storms linked to it occurred during the harvest season. While 2002 will be remembered as an excellent season for grape production, 2003 will go down as one of lower total grape and wine production.

Loudoun still remains a leader in quantity and quality of grape and wine production in Virginia. With 309 acres planted in vinifera and New World varieties, the county ranks 2nd in Virginia grape acreage. New commercial vineyard plantings increased the number of independent growers to 29. Many newcomers are attracted to the county's growing conditions and its established coterie of wine producers. The ten licensed wineries in the county produced about 81,000 gallons of wine with an annual retail market value of approximately \$7-8 million.

Recent plantings of grapes are bearing fruit, but instead of making this fruit into wine, winery owners are selling to wineries in other parts of the Commonwealth. While this might be good for cash flow, it would be better to keep these grapes and turn them into a finished wine product.

The greatest concern for Loudoun's winery owners continues to be wine sales. If the wineries here are to make money, they must sell high percentages of their wines through the tasting room, and gain increasing shelf space at retail outlets. Fortunately, the recent opening of the large Wegmans store in Eastern Loudoun and another new wine retailer in Leesburg—Borisoff's Deli—have taken on the task of retailing Loudoun wines. Several wineries have put much time and effort into marketing their wines to upscale restaurants in the DC metro area and elsewhere. Besides

these, a few wineries have decided to start selling at the county's farmers markets.

Today, Virginia wineries have only a four percent share of the highly competitive state wine market. The task before them is to attract increasing numbers of local tourists, build a reputation for quality products and try to build out-of-state shipments of wine. If the local industry succeeds in boosting on-site sales through larger flows of tourists and by moving its product through an expanding number of vintners and wine outlets, the Loudoun economy overall will benefit.

In 2003, the Department of Economic Development executed several programs designed to help the industry. In a joint funding effort with the winery owners and the Loudoun Convention and Visitors Association, it carried out an eight-week advertising campaign on WGMS FM radio in Washington. The idea was to attract more tourists and boost wine sales. It also developed a new Wine Trail Guide and included the wineries in its Spring and Fall Farm Tours. Additionally, the REDC's Farm Viability Committee conducted an analysis of the industry in an effort to understand its problems and opportunities.

The Loudoun Winegrowers Association (LWA), with its mix of winery owners and independent vineyard owners, marked its fifth year of existence in 2003. The LWA has maintained a strong commitment to educating both new and existing producers on proven wine grape production methods in Loudoun. The LWA launched a new Web site, www.loudounwine.com, which will be a helpful promotional and educational tool. Jason Murray, Loudoun commercial horticulturist, initiated a valuable and well-attended series of in-the-vineyard education programs. He also gives countless hours of on-site technical assistance to local grape growers.

WINE INDUSTRY: FOUR-YEAR PLAN

GOAL: DOUBLE WINE INDUSTRY SALES BY 2007

Data from the Virginia Tourism organization indicates that one out of every three visitors to the Commonwealth visit a winery during their stay. Achieving additional wine sales is the principal interest of the industry. The industry is willing to match County funding for targeted marketing initiatives.

Objectives:

- Increase tasting room tourism by 100%
- Increase wholesale transactions of case wine by 100%

- Increase wholesale sales to restaurants.
- Develop new upscale grocery sales.

Measurement:

The wine industry would like to measure the current number of visitors and forecast the numbers of new visitors required to achieve the objectives. Success of marketing initiatives will be determined by the measured increase of sales and number of cases sold.

Action Steps:

- ✓ Increase shared-cost marketing.
- ✓ Increase marketing activities to include magazine articles, profiles of local wineries
- ✓ Increase presence at the Visitor's Center
- ✓ Increase web-based advertising and cooperative marketing.



COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

Commercial horticulture in Loudoun is evolving and demonstrating its economic viability; it is also steadily expanding to meet market demand in Northern Virginia. Virtually all of Loudoun's horticulture operations successfully sell all of the product they are capable of producing.

The wine and vine industry in Loudoun is on the rise with 45 vineyards totaling over 309 acres in support of 10 existing wineries. To advance the local wine grape industry, Loudoun Cooperative Extension offered courses in winter pruning and training, disease management, mid-season canopy and vineyard management, and pre-harvest fruit maturity evaluation. A Mid-Atlantic Winery Design and Development program was held in Leesburg May 31, 2003, attracting over 80 people from Loudoun and the Mid-Atlantic region. The Ecological Viticulture Conference held November 14-16, 2003 in Leesburg attracted participants and speakers from 15 states, Canada and France.

The Mid-Atlantic Brambles Conference (raspberries and blackberries) was a fabulous success on February 7 and 8, 2003 in Leesburg, Virginia. Industry and academic leaders from six states presented cutting edge information, while

112 participants attended from 11 states. Of these, 41 were from Loudoun, demonstrating the strong demand and potential of the small fruits industry in Loudoun.

Additional educational programs offered in 2003 by Loudoun Cooperative Extension targeted all of the horticultural commodity groups including: vegetables, Christmas trees, nursery and greenhouse, and pesticide certification & recertification. Notably the twilight tour of Wheatland Vegetable Farms attracted over 40 participants.

Individual consultations have been a major role of the Commercial Horticulturist in 2003, keeping up with the request for services for more than 800 acres in horticultural production in Loudoun. Over 115 site visits were conducted to consult on specific issues with Loudoun's growers, as were an equal number of office consultations. One final accomplishment of the Loudoun Commercial Horticulture program is the development of an efficient organization and distribution system to notify growers of upcoming relevant events and important timely informative updates.



Mist irrigation on early high tunnel lettuce (courtesy Vineyard Nursery).

ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE: FOUR-YEAR PLAN

GOAL: EXPAND CHRISTMAS TREE PRODUCTION, WHOLESALE NURSERIES

Loudoun's Christmas tree industry, consisting of nearly 40 growers, with 25 growers actively selling, produces approximately \$800,000 in annual sales. Unsatisfied demand for local trees exceeds \$2 million per year. Wholesale nurseries include two established farms and three in the early production stage – a few years from product sales. Greenhouse production of ornamental plants is rapidly expanding.

Objectives:

Unsatisfied demand exists for all forms of ornamental horticulture. The objective is to expand production to catch up with growing Metropolitan DC and Loudoun County demand. This initiative includes a dual approach to expand existing production and recruit new growers.

Measurement:

- New plantings of 5,000 shade and ornamental trees annually
- Christmas Tree Farms: New plantings of 50,000 trees annually
- Greenhouse production: New production 10,000 square feet/year.

Action Steps:

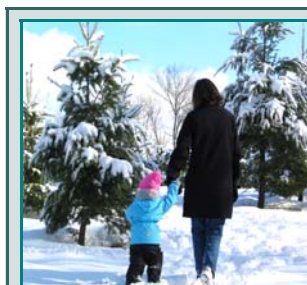
✓Increase research-based informational initiatives to demonstrate best growing practices, show economic models, shorten production cycle with containers, establish test plots to determine best Christmas tree varieties, and continue/expand shared-cost marketing program. Rural staff will assist new grower start-up, develop horticultural



Christmas begins with growing the perfect tree in Loudoun!

marketing guides and assist marketing relationships with wholesale buyers.

- ✓Increase new planting of ornamental trees.
- ✓Increase new Christmas tree plantings.
- ✓Assist growers to learn about commercially viable new plants and production methods and demonstrate gardening opportunities that enhance consumer interest in the horticulture industry.



Loudoun ranks 3rd in the state in acres of Christmas Trees planted.

EDIBLE HORTICULTURE: FOUR-YEAR PLAN

GOAL: DEVELOP RURAL LOUDOUN INTO A DIRECT MARKET FOOD PRODUCTION CENTER

Fruit and vegetable production in the county is expanding as new market opportunities become available. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA — subscription produce sales), sales to upscale restaurants and groceries are relatively new outlets to go with traditional farmers markets.

Objectives:

To increase demand for fresh local produce and generate increased expansion of Pick Your Own (PYO) farms and farms that produce for wholesale and direct market outlets. The idea is to position Loudoun as a premium choice for wholesome food consumption.

Measurement:

- Expand direct market production by 100 acres.
- Increase number of PYO farms from present 9 to 15 and increase customer visits.

Action Steps:

- ✓ Increase farm profitability from Farmers Markets.
- ✓ Raise average market sales to levels comparable with successful markets by attracting more Loudoun residents to markets through promotions, funding professional market managers, and creating advertising and marketing techniques to draw additional customers; develop additional high-price wholesale outlets.
- ✓ Provide business training, create branded produce point-of-purchase tools, develop enterprise plans for PYO farms along with producer organization.



Hydroponic lettuce at
Endless Summer Harvest



Helping seedlings grow at
Potomac Vegetable Farm



LOUDOUN VALLEY HOMEGROWN MARKETS ASSOCIATION



The Loudoun Valley HomeGrown Markets Association sponsors five farmers markets in Loudoun County. The market season begins the first weekend in May and continues through October. The five market locations and hours of operation are as follows:

Cascades	9 a.m.- 1 p.m., Sunday
Leesburg	8 a.m. – Noon, Saturday
Middleburg	8 a.m. – Noon, Saturday
Sterling	4-7 p.m., Wednesday
Purcellville	4-7 p.m., Thursday

AGRICULTURAL & FORESTAL DISTRICTS

The Agricultural and Forestal District Program was formed in 1979 under State enabling legislation as a means to “conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food and other agricultural and forestal products, and conserve and protect agricultural and forestal lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide essential open spaces for clean air sheds, as well as for aesthetic purposes.” Loudoun County supports these goals and is committed to working with district landowners to preserve the rural and agricultural character of the County.

In March 2002 the Agricultural and Forestal District Program was transferred to the Department of Economic Development. An audit of the program disclosed the need to carefully examine the procedures and processes of the Program. In order to update County’s records a terminate/re-create process has been followed when a District approaches its expiration date. To date 11 out of the 23 Districts have been re-created.

Loudoun County
currently has over
70,000 acres
enrolled in
23 Ag Districts.

CATTLE INDUSTRY: FOUR-YEAR PLAN

GOAL: EXPAND THE CATTLE INDUSTRY AND INCREASE REVENUE BY 15% BY 2007

Loudoun's rural grassland is well suited to raising livestock. As of January 2003 Loudoun ranked 14th among Virginia counties with 34,000 cattle and calves. A new organization, the Loudoun Cattlemen's Association, is being formed to: promote the production and tradition of raising cattle, provide opportunities for networking and fellowship among cattle producers, carry on educational and promotional efforts for production and sale of livestock and livestock products and sponsor sales of livestock.



Objectives:

Increase profitability for the cattle industry by increasing sales of "Direct Market" beef and expanding live cattle sales. "Direct Market" beef means packaged meat products sold directly to consumers.

Measurement:

- Increase cattle population from 34,000 to 40,000.
- Increase from 3 to 20 direct market producers, who sell directly to consumers.
- Increase net income from cattle production by 15%.

Action Steps:

- ✓ Using the newly formed Cattlemen's Association as a base, initial steps include identifying market channel, organize production system (especially for direct market beef), and assisting the new association with cooperative marketing.
- ✓ To enable rural land to be efficiently used for livestock there is a need to create incentives to build and maintain fencing and to publicize the benefits of cooperation among small herd owners.

The Loudoun Cattlemen's Association has been formed to promote the production and tradition of raising cattle in and around Loudoun County.

Contact Gary Hornbaker to receive a directory listing local beef farms and their available products and services.

*703-771-5427
ghornbaker@loudoun.gov*

AGRIBUSINESS

The farm equipment business in Loudoun continues shifting to sales of compact tractors and lawn mowers. Sales of traditional farm equipment include a few hay cutting and baling machines, but replacement parts and repairs of existing large machines are the primary source of revenue in bigger equipment. Few local farms can justify the hefty cost of high-horsepower tractors and combines. As many of Loudoun's farms undergo subdivision, the smaller pieces of land in production and their new uses do not need the big tractors of yesterday.

Sales at the two major tractor dealers were up substantially over 2002—a year which included drought conditions. Unusually heavy rainfall throughout the summer of 2003 kept mowers and bush hogs running overtime. The blizzard of February 2003 and the hurricane in September drove heavy sales in related product areas—snow removal equipment, generators, chainsaws, and debris chippers.

Custom equipment operators are finding their services in considerable demand. New landowners

want them to make hay, or bushhog their fields. Many landowners vitally need custom operators to keep their places in production to qualify for land use tax valuation. Among them are the many horse farms and specialized operations.

Seed, feed, and supply stores also reported sales growth. Contributing factors included the weather conditions, increased residential growth and the expansion of horse and small farm operations. Tractor Supply Company, Loudoun County Milling Company, and Southern States Purcellville Coop were among those surveyed. While 2003 did see the closing of the Southern States Leesburg store, it is widely accepted that this was not for lack of sales viability but due to a corporate real estate strategy.

A significant common thread in the comments of all the representatives of these agricultural equipment, support services, and supply businesses was the proportional importance of the horse industry in their customer bases. In all cases, the equine industry is becoming the strongest agribusiness component.

The blizzard in February and the hurricane in September helped sell snow plows and generators.

LOUDOUN IS HORSE COUNTRY



Loudoun has 15,800 equines — more than any other Commonwealth county— valued at more than \$294 million

The REDC continues to be at the forefront of the county's efforts to promote the equine industry.

The horse—like the Dulles Airport Terminal—is an icon of Loudoun County. The tradition, the numbers and the value of the horse industry here are enduring. Over the last year, as dramatic land tenure changes swept the county, the equine industry has begun to make accommodations to the fast pace of development and shrinking scenes of open space for horses.

Great progress occurred with construction of the initial portion of a county-wide equestrian trail system. Horse organizations and their members have made their presence felt. Following the lead of Donna Rogers, they combined their efforts to perform the actual work of building a trail in central Loudoun around the county-owned landfill. The trail will be officially inaugurated in the spring of 2004.

The horse industry was the subject of a comprehensive SWOT analysis conducted by the REDC's Farm Viability Committee. Nine horse and horse business owners attended a two-hour meeting to discuss the problems faced by the equine community and the opportunities open to it to resolve them. Among the future tasks uncovered by this group are: developing a multi-purpose horse facility, developing a county-wide trail system. For more detail, see recommendations below.



	Equine Inventory ^{1/}	Total Value	Average Value Per Equine
	-number-	-dollars-	-dollars-
Northern			
Clarke	4,400	\$70,289,000	\$15,975
Culpepper	3,300	\$41,915,000	\$12,702
Fairfax	3,000	\$27,878,000	\$9,293
Fauquier	13,700	\$226,083,000	\$16,502
Frederick	2,000	\$15,245,000	\$7,623
Loudoun	15,800	\$294,671,000	\$18,650
Madison	2,500	\$17,761,000	\$7,104
Page	1,000	\$5,770,000	\$5,770
Prince William	3,900	\$37,113,000	\$9,516
Rappahannock	2,000	\$12,690,000	\$6,345
Rockingham	4,500	\$18,458,000	\$4,102
Shenandoah	2,000	\$8,616,000	\$4,308
Stafford	1,300	\$6,991,000	\$5,378
Warren	1,100	\$11,610,000	\$10,555
District Total	60,500	\$795,090,000	\$13,142

Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service Equine Report
Emphasizes of Equine Industry to Loudoun

EQUINE INDUSTRY: FOUR-YEAR PLAN

GOAL: INCREASE ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC RECREATIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF EQUINE INDUSTRY. INCREASE THE LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT FROM THE HORSE INDUSTRY.

Objectives:

Increase output and revenue of businesses serving the equine industry.

Promote equine industry involvement and participation in tourism.

Stimulate public sector ridership by creating county-wide system of public access recreational trails for horses and hikers.

Increase the production of quality hay for the horse industry.

Measurement:

- Number of horse-related businesses and their sales.
 - Total mileage of recreational trails.
 - Number of hay producers and their sales.
- (Benchmarks will be established during 2004)

Action Steps:

- ✓ Create public-private partnerships with facilities like Morven Park to provide equestrian facilities open to the public.
- ✓ Develop countywide horse and hiker/recreational/trail plan.
- ✓ Work with developers and private landowners to donate trail easements and linear parklands for new trails and links.
- ✓ Encourage volunteer groups to partner with Loudoun County to design and maintain trails.
- ✓ Partner with Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, Potomac Trail Council, National Park Service, and other organizations to develop new trails and links to existing ones.
- ✓ Track implementation of best practices by hay producers.



Evergreen Mills Equestrian and Hiking Trail



MAIN STREET LOUDOUN

Main Street Loudoun (MSL) is an economic development program that leverages volunteer resources to encourage new business attraction, business expansion, capital investment, and tourism growth in Loudoun's historic commercial centers. MSL promotes the successful National Main Street Four-Point Approach™ to commercial district enhancement. The four points include strengthening the commercial tax base (*Economic Restructuring*), marketing downtown to customers and potential investors (*Promotion*), enhancing the physical appearance of commercial centers (*Design*), and organizing businesses and volunteers (*Organization*) to work together to preserve and enhance our downtowns.

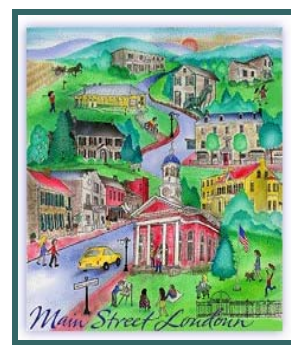
The program was launched officially with the first Main Street Loudoun Partnership meeting in January 2003. First year activities focused on establishing baseline data on community commercial districts, organizing countywide and town Main Street committees, and educating community leaders, volunteers, and the business community about MSL and the Four-Point Approach.

Highlights of MSL's first year included computerizing business and commercial building inventories for all towns; two Loudoun County Design Cabinet charrettes to brainstorm ideas for commercial redevelopment; establishment of newsletter and website communications; field trips to other Virginia Main Street towns; public workshops on Design and Pedestrian Safety; a Spring 2004 "Main Street is Blooming" event to spruce up Loudoun's downtowns; and technical assistance to small businesses and to local

Main Street organizations. The next phase of the MSL Program includes implementing an outreach program to Loudoun villages and eastern Loudoun communities; expanding Main Street projects both countywide and locally; and planning for a countywide wayfinding system and for county involvement in the Jamestown 2007 celebrations.

Local Main Street programs are underway in all of Loudoun's towns. As one of only a handful of countywide Main Street programs in the nation, MSL assists these local programs in implementing the Main Street Four-Point Approach. The Four-Point Approach has been used successfully in over 1,700 communities nationwide. Since the program's inception in 1980, Main Street programs have resulted in \$17 billion in public and private reinvestment in Main Street commercial districts, 57,470 new net businesses, 231,682 new net jobs and 93,734 building rehabilitations. The average number of dollars generated in each community for every dollar used to operate the local Main Street program is \$40.35.¹

¹Source: 2003 Reinvestment Statistics, National Main Street Center, www.mainstreet.org



Stay current by visiting
www.mainstreetloudoun.org

FARM BUSINESS PLANNING INITIATIVE

Providing assistance to landowners and farmers who wish to form a new or expanded rural enterprise.

The **Loudoun Farm Business Planning Initiative** is an effort to provide assistance to Loudoun farmers and landowners interested in higher-value agriculture enterprises, by conducting resource assessments of current operations and providing assistance to help create farm business plans. Recent budget initiatives by the Board of Supervisors extend this initiative through FY05.

Gary W. Hornbaker, is available to assist farmers and agriculture landowners to prepare a **Farm Business Plan**. This service is offered free of charge to Loudoun agriculture producers. Gary was hired in June 2003 as the Loudoun County Rural Resources Coordinator. He has served as the Agriculture Extension Agent in Loudoun County for twenty years and has a broad background in agriculture production and management expertise. He continues to farm part-time producing livestock and forages, and has an extensive knowledge of local agriculture infrastructure.

For more information
or for a sample
Business Plan, visit the
Rural Loudoun Website at
www.rural-loudoun.state.va.us

Randall Travel Marketing recommends expansion of tourism "product development"



TOURISM

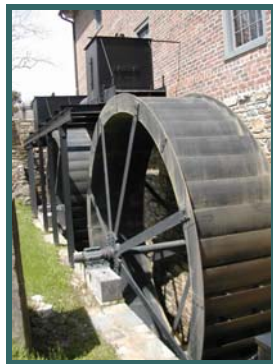
The Loudoun Convention and Visitors Association (LCVA) continued to promote authentic rural experiences through the implementation of a countywide tourism marketing plan. Specific support for the rural tourism products included the following:

- Distribution of the four Loudoun County rural brochures; the Loudoun Wine Trail Guide, the Spring Farm Tour and Product Guide, the Farm Color Tour Guide and the Christmas Tree Guide in the Visitor Center, at portable Visitor Center locations and in group welcome bags.
- Support of bed and breakfasts, and inns, through an active membership in the B&B Guild.
- Promotion of rural events in the quarterly "Seasonal Guide" publication which has a quarterly distribution of 15,000 and includes a subscriber list of 3,000 plus in the Virginia and Mid-Atlantic markets.
- The use of rural products at industry tradeshows for giveaways and promotional items.
- Co-op partner with LCEDC and the Loudoun wineries in the WGMS radio promotion and co-op partner with the Loudoun wineries in Where Magazine.
- Promotion of rural facilities and venues through the group sales program that targets corporate, association and government meetings, retreats and company picnics, weddings and family reunions and the motorcoach market.
- Publicity featuring rural products resulting in two articles in motorcoach magazines, guest "spots" on a weekly event and activity segment of Adelphia Channel 3 and national coverage on ESPN's Super Retriever Series held at Glenwood Park.



- Recognition of the B&B Guild and LCEDC's Loudoun Wine Trail Guide as annual tourism award winners at the LCVA Annual meeting.

During 2003, LCVA invested in a comprehensive market research study. The results of the study position Loudoun tourism products as "top" attractors for leisure visitors. Specifically the research identifies "scenic beauty, horse country and wineries" as the attractors or reasons people visit Loudoun County. The study recommends more aggressive marketing of the county as a bed and breakfast destination; and it also included executive interviews with community leaders. These interviews suggested development of shuttle tours from the eastern Loudoun hotels to western Loudoun, a permanent farmer's market, an equine facility, upscale inn with fine dining, resort spa, guided heritage tours, an arts and crafts trail, horse farm tours and an antique trail.



Measurement:

- Number of buildings preserved.
- Number of acres kept in open space.

HISTORIC TOURISM: FOUR-YEAR PLAN

GOAL: GIVE TOURISTS REASONS TO VISIT HISTORIC SITES IN LOUDOUN COUNTY; EXPAND UNIQUE COUNTY APPEAL IN HISTORIC TOURISM AND PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE.

Objectives:

Provide developers and homeowners incentives to restore and maintain historic buildings and open space.

Action Steps:

- ✓ Expand the scope of Residential Revitalization Ordinance Chapter 870 to entire county.
- ✓ Meet with developers to design historic tourism projects compatible with developer's goals and objectives.
- ✓ Encourage adaptive reuse of barns and other agricultural buildings.

AGRONOMY

For Loudoun County agronomics, 2003 was a year of highly variable yields for grain crops but an above average year for forages (pasture and hay). The moderately wet winter of 2002 was followed by continuous periods of rain throughout the summer of 2003. This provided much needed moisture for the replenishment of ground water resources but stressed crop and forage production throughout the county.

Many crops had productivity levels affected by the moisture and cooler temperatures that were associated with the weather systems. Plantings were delayed, nitrogen uptake was inconsistent due to temperatures and potential leaching of nutrients, and general flooding of low lying areas. Standing crop dry-down of harvestable crops was affected by the increased moisture and many producers increased overall production cost per acre when adding in mechanical drying time.

The abundant rainfall allowed pastures and hayfields to produce large quantities of forage. Many producers that focus on harvesting and selling quality hay for the local horse and livestock industry were unable to cover a large number of acres at the appropriate time to ensure a quality salable product. Production of mulch hay for the landscape market was at an all time high.

In 2003 Loudoun County had approximately 6,400 acres of corn for grain and silage, 7,400 acres of soybeans, 1,500 acres of small grains (wheat and barley), 52,000 acres of hay, and 76,000 acres of pasture, for a total of 143,300 acres in production. Cattle and livestock production in general have held strong.

The demand and price for quality horse hay continued to grow, with more hay producers striving to develop that market. Farmers who were able to provide quality hay and straw to the local horse industry were able to realize a return per bale from \$4.00 to \$8.00 per bale or more. Demand



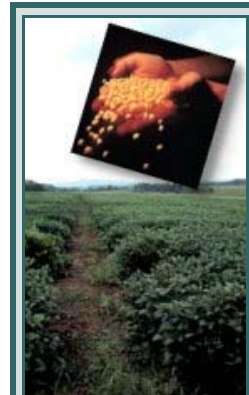
Loudoun ranked 7th among Virginia counties for hay tonnage and 20th for overall agricultural production in 2003.

for straw for bedding and landscaping continues to grow.

Land rental rates continued to remain in the range of zero to \$35.00 per acre, depending upon yield potential, fences, and location. There was a strong demand for pastureland (horses and cattle); however, lack of fencing continued to be an issue that many landowners needed to address.

Many farmers and landowners participated in state and federal programs to install conservation practices on their land. Practices such as fencing out streams, establishing buffers on fields, and taking land out of crop production to be planted into grass continued as water quality and environmental concerns increased.

Hay production was not only impacted by the seasonal moisture but also by the lack of custom farm services to make the hay for non-agricultural landowners. Field operations such as planting, spraying, brush hogging, and harvesting continued being headaches because of the increasing difficulty of finding custom operators to do these tasks.



In 2003, Loudoun County had approximately 7,400 acres of soybeans.

FARMLAND-FOR-LEASE PROGRAM

In the second year of operation, the Farmland-for-Lease Program has received a slow but steady stream of calls. Most of these calls have been for specific land use needs such as horse farm rental, temporary vineyard development and orchard development. Some calls have been fishing expeditions. For example, landowners have wanted prospective leasees to take care of a parcel of land that they have paid no attention to for years. Others,

speaking as prospective renters, have actually been looking for land to buy, perhaps a distressed property that might be purchased for little money.

A few landowners have called the program over a period of months in an effort to find someone to work with them to keep a property in production. Some owners decided to operate the land themselves.

The Farmland-for-Lease Program has developed the reputation as the place to call for help in resolving tricky land use problems. A recent success was an older, incapacitated farmer looking for help to run a small blackberry operation. Fortunately, the program was able to hook him up with a young vegetable and fruit farmer who had the time and know-how to take over the blackberries and run them for his profit.



Farmland-for-Lease is a free, County-sponsored program that matches renters and landowners who want to work together to keep all of the county's land resources working.

LOUDOUN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*Stream monitoring
information is
available at [www.
loudoun.vaswcd.org](http://www.loudoun.vaswcd.org)*

The District is steered by a Board of five Directors, three of whom are elected in the general election and two appointed by the state, with a staff of four experienced professionals. The District provides a series of programs and activities aimed at conservation of natural resources and improved water quality. To help achieve its goals, the District receives technical assistance and/or support from numerous governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, volunteer groups, and concerned citizens.

Environmental/Conservation Education for Loudoun residents of all ages is one of the District's most important and beneficial programs. 2003 highlights included school programs, exhibits, and field trips for students K-12; support and/or sponsorship of special events such as the County Fair, Leesburg-Loudoun Arbor Day, and Ag Awareness Day; and mini-grants of \$500 each were awarded to two local schools for environmental education projects. The District also published its newsletter, *Terraqueous*, and Annual Report and prepared articles on conservation topics for local newspapers.

The District continued its TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) stream monitoring program, collecting data on water quality parameters of listed stream segments impaired by fecal coliform bacteria. In the summer, the District and NRCS (USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service) Leesburg staff assisted the NRCS Wetland Science Institute with fish surveys on properties that have established stream buffers. Throughout the year, staff also worked with students and volunteer groups to implement activities related to stream monitoring and improving water quality. Groups with which the District worked in 2003 included the North Fork Goose Creek Watershed Committee, Wancopin Watershed Neighbors, and Loudoun Watershed Watch. The District continued to be represented on the Loudoun Water Resources Technical Advisory Committee and the Rural Economic Development Council.

In June 2003, the District was asked by the County to head the locally led effort to develop a TMDL plan for the Catoclin Creek Watershed. Loudoun County, the District, the Virginia Depart-

ment of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Map-Tech, Inc., and local stakeholders have been working since that time to develop an implementation plan which should be finalized in 2004.

Throughout 2003, the District provided technical assistance and cost-share funding of approximately \$90,790 to Loudoun farmers and land-

owners for the installation of agricultural BMPs (Best Management Practices) which help to reduce nonpoint source pollution and protect the waters of our streams, the Potomac River, and the Chesapeake Bay. Both the District and USDA-NRCS technical staff worked with farmers and landowners to implement soil and water conservation measures, including the development of conservation farm plans and the design of structural conservation practices. The District worked closely with the County in the implementation of its land use tax program by developing appropriate plans for

properties involved in agricultural and horticultural activities.

In the field of urban conservation, District staff worked with individual homeowners and Homeowner Associations to address problems related to soil and water conservation. Improperly maintained lawns, open space, and septic systems can contribute significantly to ground and/or surface water pollution. Staff provided technical assistance to combat erosion, improve drainage, and to promote proper lawn care and maintenance of open space.

In the Fall of 2003, the Loudoun District worked with other Virginia Conservation Districts to develop an agenda of pro-conservation issues for consideration by the 2004 General Assembly. District Directors across the state worked hard to impress upon the Governor and state legislators the importance of maintaining Virginia's natural resources conservation and water quality programs.



Collecting data for the stream monitoring program to study water quality parameters.

LOUDOUN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Loudoun Cooperative Extension promotes sustainable and profitable agriculture and educates the public in protecting and enhancing the environment. In July of 2003, the Extension staff was bolstered with the addition of Corey Childs who was hired to fill the Agricultural Extension Agent position that was left vacant by the retirement of Gary Hornbaker.

Upon his arrival, Corey Childs, a crop and animal specialist, also coordinated efforts to update the unit agricultural contact list and put in place a system which allows for a more effective use of technology in providing information to the residents of the county. He worked with area Extension Agents to conduct Regional Beef and Forages School for 174 total participants. These programs allowed 41 area producers to become certified as Beef Quality Assured producers. Corey conducted a Pork Quality Assurance Certification Training Program for 14 area producers, enabling them to market their swine under the PQA trademark. Loudoun County now has a Cattlemen's Association which focuses on the development of new marketing channels for direct live animal and end product sales. This group was started by 27 interested local producers with the assistance of the Loudoun Extension staff and the Department of Economic Development.

Because of the extremely wet growing season and associated periodic lowland flooding that struck the county, moisture from a passing hurricane and the touch-down of a tornado, Corey worked with producers to confirm \$228,124 in agricultural damage to local farms and reported this to USDA/FEMA. He also gathered hay supply data and updated a database of 37,000 square bales and 7,900 round bales available for sale or donation.

A 6 hour "intensive" farm profitability seminar covering the development of business plans, budgets and decision-making skills was held for

12 county producers. Loudoun Extension also offered workshops, consultations or on site farm visits on beef, sheep, horse and forage production, a livestock profitability seminar and pesticide recertification programs for 330 producers.



Corey Childs measuring forage growth at Wheatland Farms.

Debbie Dillion, Urban Horticulturist, coordinated the popular Master Gardener training program for 17 individuals during Winter 2003. This program offers education, diagnostic services, and one-on-one consultations to local citizens through the operation of a Helpline office and educational programs. With 117 active Master Gardener volunteers, over 4500 hours of service were contributed. Master Gardeners grow and maintain an organic Demonstration Garden/Outdoor Classroom at Leesburg's Ida Lee Park from which over 600 pounds of produce was donated to Loudoun Interfaith Relief in the past year.

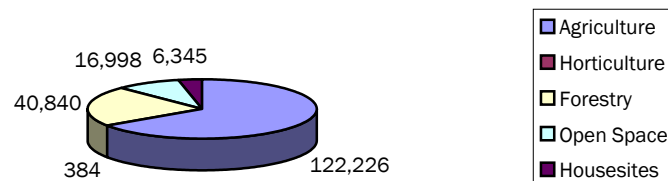
Master Gardener volunteers contributed over 4500 hours of service in 2003.



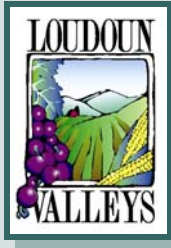
Loudoun 4-H'ers showing club lambs

LAND USE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Acres of Land Use by Class



With 5,002 parcels, there are over 186,793 acres enrolled in the Land Use Assessment Program.



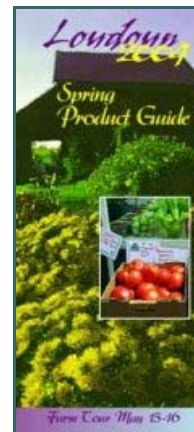
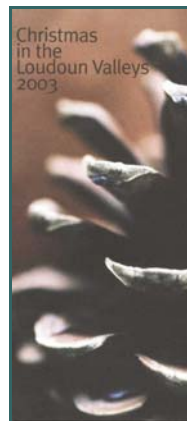
The Loudoun County Rural Economic Development Council would like to thank the following for their contributions to the 2003 Annual Report:

Bob Andros
Jeff Browning
Corey Childs
Jim Cross
Marian Czarnecki
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Gary Hornbaker
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John Montel
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2003, the Department's focus in Rural Economic Development was in four primary areas.

1. *Marketing Loudoun's farms and products.* The Farm Fresh Product Guide and Spring Farm Tour and the Farm Color Tour brochures included both farms on the Tours as well farms that sell products direct to the public throughout the spring, summer and fall. Other marketing-related efforts included Loudoun Transit bus ad posters, and advertising the Loudoun Wine Trail on WGMS radio.
2. *Organizing farmer groups and supporting their activities.* Chief of these is the Loudoun Farmers Market Association. A new group, the Loudoun Cattlemen's Association, started operations recently. It will emphasize live animal and beef product sales.
3. *The Agricultural and Forestal District Program.* This remained a strong force in keeping land productive. The program reorganized many of its districts over the last year and enlisted many new landowners.
4. *Existing and prospective rural business owners.* Many received hundreds of hours of economic and regulatory assistance from county staff.



The Department of Economic Development distributed over 65,000 brochures in 2003. Included in this distribution are the Farm Color Tour & Traditional Products Guide, Christmas in the Loudoun Valleys, the Spring Farm Tour & Product Guide, and the Loudoun Wine Trail Brochure.

FUN ON LOUDOUN FARMS

For more information on Rural Economic Development in Loudoun County visit:

www.rural-loudoun.state.va.us

or call 703-777-0426

An estimated 12,000 visitors explored Loudoun's farms during the Spring and Fall farm tours.

